

# Dead Curse of Tcheser Ka Ra, Priestess of the Sun God

Seven Deaths and Host of Misfortunes Fall on Westerners Who Have Violated the Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter.—Mummy Case in British Museum That Is Dreaded by Officials and Photographers.

By B. M. HUNTER.

Special Cable to The Tribune.

LONDON, July 16.—This is the story of the mystery of Tcheser Ka Ra, high priestess of Amen Ra, the dread deity of the Sun. Her mummy has never been traced, but the mummy case lies in the prosaic surroundings of Bloomsbury, the old-fashioned London district which contains the world-famed British museum. To the malign influence of this yellow coffin are attributed no less than seven deaths, besides a whole host of accidents, illnesses and minor strokes of ill fortune.

Woe to him who injures the tomb! The dead man shall point out the evil-doer to the Devourer of the Under-World—Soul and body shall be destroyed!

Thus chanted the ancient Egyptians as they lowered their sacred dead into the granite tombs in the recesses of the pyramids. They called on the chief of the powers of evil, the Devourer of the Underworld, to weave his spells about the coffin of the dead priestess, to guard her earthly frame from harm or decay, and to wreak a bitter vengeance on any rash man who should dare to despoil or deface the sacred remains. Egyptologists sometimes admit that their excursions into the lost ways of Egyptian history have brought them face to face with happenings of a ghastly and horrible nature, but they will not, for fear—tell stories of the influence of the mummies of rulers of distant dynasties with which the museums of Europe and America are stocked. Let the facts speak for themselves in this London case.

## Where Lies Ill-Boding Coffin.

In the inner room of the Egyptian gallery, where the most ancient mummies are stored, lies the ill-boding coffin. All round the room the brilliant cases stand like sentinels guarding the quiet sleep of the mummies in the glass cases that fill the center of the room. Each of these coffins is shaped to the exact representation of the corpse it once enclosed. They are carved out of wood and brightly painted to represent the garments and ornaments worn during the lifetime of the deceased. There, between the pictured coffins of two dead Pharaohs, stand the coffin of Tcheser Ka Ra, distinguished by the brilliant yellow color of her robes. At first sight the mummy case looks harmless enough. It represents a woman in the robes of an Egyptian priestess. She is of medium height and has

a plain, almost good-natured face, with the usual Egyptian slanting eyes and pointed lips. Innumerable precious stones are painted round her neck and in the folds of her voluminous robes. For she was a very notable lady in her day. Egyptologists have declared her to be the high-priestess of the Temple of the Sun at Thebes. As such Tcheser Ka Ra was, after the Pharaoh, the most important personage in Egypt. She enjoyed an immense fortune and was of royal descent, for in the renowned temple of Amen Ra, the sun god, only the daughters of the Pharaohs were eligible to serve.

As high priestess, Tcheser Ka Ra was admitted into all the dark secrets of the Theban temple. She knew how the Egyptian priests changed the Nile into blood and turned their staves into serpents at the challenge of Moses. Possibly she was a witness of the prodigy, for the inscriptions on her coffin point to the fact that the priestess was living in Egypt in 1600, B. C., the period when the Israelites took their stormy departure from the land.

## Coffin Never Occupied.

Nothing is known of the mummy corpse of Tcheser Ka Ra. It has even been conjectured by Egyptologists that the coffin was never occupied, for the following reason: Every year one of the priestesses of the Sun Temple was sacrificed to the crocodiles of the Nile to insure the continued favor of the resplendent one, the sun god. Scholars have deciphered the whole scene from papyrus rolls found in the temple. Every year the most beautiful and distinguished maiden in the Theban temple was chosen to be the "divine wife" of Amen Ra, the sun god. For eleven months she lived in the temple, ruling it in the name of her celestial husband and treated as a goddess herself. Then, amid the sound of music, and the weeping and wailing of the women, she was decked in the most magnificent robes, crowned with flowers and flung to the hungry jaws of the crocodiles that crowded round the sides of the great dam in the river Nile.

The body of the "divine wife" was of course never recovered. But the most exact rites of burial were performed and her spirit was solemnly invoked to come and dwell within the empty coffin that was laid in the gorgeously carved sarcophagus and fill it with magic potency. No mystic spells were omitted to guard the mummy case that enclosed the spirit of the divine bride of the sun and to call down disaster on whoever molested it.

## Shadow of Curse Falls.

An Arab, some twenty years ago, first



EGYPTIAN RELIC.

discovered the empty mummy case of Tcheser Ka Ra. This man had been lent by Mustapha Ali to a party of five English archaeologists, who were exploring the gray ruins of the Theban temple. For hours they had been searching fruitlessly under the brilliant blue sky, suffering greatly from the torrid heat and the mosquitoes. It was not until midnight that the Arab came upon the treasure amid the ruins of a granite sarcophagus. In eager excitement the

five explorers bent over the yellow coffin of the priestess. The handsome Arab was paid to the Arab, for the inscriptions showed that the find belonged to an ancient and very interesting period. But even in the first glow of their success the grim shadow of the curse began to fall on the little band. Half an hour afterwards a gun exploded for no apparent reason, inflicting such desperate injuries on their leader that his right arm had to be amputated. The next day a similarly mysterious shooting accident terminated the life of a second member of the party and the same night the mail brought the news to two others that they had lost the bulk of their fortunes.

Misfortune Follows Misfortune. The fifth archaeologist remained unscathed. He bought their rights in the mummy case from his poverty-stricken companions and returned with his prize to England. Here he presented Tcheser Ka Ra to a favorite sister, never dreaming of the ill-luck attaching to the gift. The English lady, delighted with the quaint figure of the priestess, placed it in the entrance hall of her peaceful English country home. From that moment misfortune followed misfortune in the house. Sickness, financial losses and every known form of trouble pursued its inmates without ceasing, just as they had pursued the little band of archaeologists who had first set eyes on Tcheser Ka Ra's ill-omened face. No thought as yet arose of connecting the priestess of Amen Ra with this chain of ill-fortune. On the contrary, the daughter of the Pharaohs was an honored member of the English household, and so much attached did the family become to the yellow figure that they resolved to have the mummy case photographed.

Photographer Under Curse. A photographer was sent for. He arranged his camera in the hall, one bright June and took a very satisfactory picture of the priestess of Amen Ra standing in front of an open window with the great branches of a elm tree in the garden without dimly showing behind the solemn draped figure. Contentedly the photographer returned home to develop the negative. As he drew the negative from the developing bath he saw he had a beautifully clear print, but as he looked again, the smile died out of his face. What had happened to the photograph? Had some one been playing tricks with his plates? This was not the face he had seen depicted on the coffin cover, contented, amiable, the face of Tcheser Ka Ra, as the English family knew her. The photograph displayed, instead, the countenance of a fierce, malignant woman, with a diabolical expression, reflecting, one might think, the terrors of some ghastly place of torment!

While the shops and tailors are cleaning out their summer stocks, the shelves are being made ready for the autumn goods. It's pretty hot to think of it, but, apropos, a drummer, and his samples consisted of sealskin goods principally, but included a general line of furs, muffs, Russian pony coats, tippets for the children, and all the features of a full line of fur were shown, and as each perspiring customer made his selection they adjourned for one of those cool ones in a long glass.

Wouldn't that put one over on the ice cream freezer? But that is not the question. To go back to the beginning. Autumn, the season of falling leaves, brown eider and chilly nights, is almost here. Sounds good, doesn't it? That is, it is about seven weeks in the future, and the men who sell clothing or make smart clothes are getting ready to extend it a cordial welcome. The buyer will do the rest.

Summer suitings have run to gray, with some blues for favorite, but the well-dressed man of the "Brown October Ale" period will have to bow to the dictates of fashion and the quiet black or the hushed-up brown will be predominant.

If your wife has spent all your money for her vacation or for her new fall suit, you can still be in fashion by taking your worn serge that has seen hard service, and by dyeing it black or brown, be "in the swim."

For black and tan—not the drink—is the solemn decree handed down by our kings, the tailors, throughout the

length and breadth of the country. Or you might—if your serge won't stand the change—wait, meekly, until your wife has discarded her suit, and have your trousers cut from her old skirt. For another decree of fashion is that your wife's clothes also will be either brown or black.

Indeed, the rights of women have even influenced the field man thought he dominated, namely, his styles, for still another decree is that you shall follow your wife's good taste in wearing close fitting skirts and coats, sans padding, sans flaring trousers, sans diction, pocket flaps, and sans bright buttons innumerable.

All men's styles, declare the authorities, will have a conservative trend for the fall. Black and brown, and some her colors, do not lend themselves to extreme novelties in styles. And men, despite their vaunted independence, humbly accept the dictates of fashion, and such a thing as rebellion does not even suggest itself to the martyrs.

"I look like an undertaker in black," said one, mournfully, when he heard the mandate, "but I guess I'll have to get in line." "Never mind, old man," consoled a friend, "you'll be allowed to wear the black peppered with white dots." Horrors! did he mean polka dots?

Back East the tailors and clothiers are going to have a fashion show this fall to exploit the newest things in sartorial art. This will be for both men and women, and the latest patterns, as well as the styles, will be shown. Exhibited will be all the latest ideas in black and brown fabrics, and some idea can be secured of the styles for the season.

Ra. "That's what I say. Treat her civil, and she'll behave as a lady off suddenly in the flower of a brilliant career, there were not wanting friends to declare that he was a victim himself to the evil eye of the priestess of the sun."

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"In less than two months that same gentleman came back to see me. He looked very ill, I thought. Presently he told me that he had buried the photograph of the mummy case in the garden. From the first moment it had brought him nothing but misfortune. So terrified did he become of the malice of the Egyptian priestess that he was afraid to burn it. He buried it three feet deep in the ground where he hoped his ill-luck would remain also."

Victim of the Evil Eye. A well-known English journalist, Fletcher Robinson, went into the matter at great length. He saw nothing

amusing in the story of the curse of Tcheser Ka Ra, and when he was cut off suddenly in the flower of a brilliant career, there were not wanting friends to declare that he was a victim himself to the evil eye of the priestess of the sun."

Now it is reported that a wealthy American, an art collector of world-wide repute, has offered \$10,000 for the mummy case of Tcheser Ka Ra, high priestess of Amen Ra. Perhaps the price is a nifty influence of the new world will serve to nullify the curse of this viceroy of the old, and the blight of Tcheser Ka Ra may be waited away for ever by the fresh breezes of the Atlantic.

Photographer Stricken Blind. When the strange story of the Priestess of the Sun became rumored abroad, a great demand for photographs sprang up and an enterprising Bloomsbury picture dealer named Davies obtained permission to have another portrait taken. Up to that moment Davies had been a brisk, clear-sighted man, a familiar figure to American visitors, standing at the door of his fine art gallery in Museum street. From the moment he touched the ill-omened mummy case darkness closed in upon him.

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Vict